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ABSTRACT

Peer mentoring among African-American males (referred to as "homies") on the west side of Chicago was examined in an afrocentric ethnographic study. The study used three data collection methods: a survey (of respondents' definition of the word "mentor") administered at bus stops, elevated train stations, gyms, and libraries to approximately 100 college- and noncollege-educated African-American males; observation of African-American males in their neighborhoods (on street corners, in gyms, on playgrounds, in grocery stores); and in-depth interviews of African-American males who were receiving counseling services from the researcher. Fewer than 30 percent responded to the survey. Survey responses defined "mentor" with words like leader, friend, advisor, and God, and respondents indicated they understood the importance of being in mentoring positions. Four themes emerged from the interviews and participant observations: (1) the culture that gets defined becomes the one that is controlled; (2) "homies" will not travel from their neighborhood either physically or mentally; (3) "homies" have maintained and supported their roles as social outcasts by creating a subculture of gangs and drugs; and (4) in addition to isolating them from society, the culture created by "homies" denies them the tools to fight the system adequately. (Contains 116 references.) (MN)

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